

SPECIFICATION

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TESTING LOGIC AND EMBEDDED MEMORY IN PARALLEL

Background of the Invention

[0001] Field of the Invention

[0002] The present invention generally relates to an apparatus for testing logic and embedded memory in a semiconductor integrated circuit device located on the same chip.

[0003] Recently, various types of semiconductor integrated circuit devices (hereinafter referred to as LSIs) with a variety of memory built-in structures have been put in practical use. For example, in order to attain a high speed data processing, a plurality of memories each with a small capacity are provided on the same substrate as data processing buffers, or a memory with a large capacity such a cache memory of a microprocessor is provided on the same substrate.

[0004] Therefore, not only increase of the scale of the LSI but also security for test coverage, decrease of an increasing test time, etc. in conducting a functional test of the LSI have become significant problems.

[0005] In general, an operation test of an internal combinational circuit including a logic circuit built in an LSI (namely, the so-called logic test) is carried out by supplying the LSI with a predetermined test vector for confirming the function of the LSI and by comparing an operational value in response to the test vector read from the LSI with an expected value. This is not, however, a very good method to secure the test coverage of the operation test with a small number of test vectors.

[0006] Accordingly, a flip-flop or the like built in an LSI is recently provided with a sequential circuit having a scan function, and a test by a scanning method using the

sequential circuit has been occasionally adopted. The test by the scanning method (hereinafter referred to as the scan test) is described in, for example, "Digital Kairo No Kosho Shindan, vol. 1" by Kinoshita, et al., pp. 214-215, published by Kogaku Tosho K. K.). Furthermore, a memory test for a built-in memory in an LSI is carried out by conducting a data read/write test using a predetermined algorithm such as a marching algorithm and a checker algorithm.

[0007] However, the read/write test is not sufficient in the built-in memory. For example, even when the built-in memory has a memory cell structure of an RAM base, there is possibility of occurrence of a production problem such as data disappearance due to a leakage current in a specific memory cell. Therefore, a test for securing data hold during a predetermined time period is required to be conducted. Specifically, in this data holding test, a predetermined data is previously written in a memory, no data is written in or read from the memory for a predetermined period of time, and it is checked whether or not the written data is held after the predetermined period of time. The data holding test requires a holding period of several tens through several hundreds ms (milliseconds) during which no memory access is executed. This period is much longer than a general operation time of an LSI of several through several tens ns (nanoseconds).

[0008] As more LSI designs incorporate embedded memory it is necessary to develop testing techniques which will be efficient and speed up the time required for testing.

Summary of the Invention

[0009] Accordingly, an object of the present invention is to provide parallel testing of LSI designs having both memory and logic components.

[0010] Another object is to optimize the test time without impacting test quality.

[0011] A further objective is to optimize the test time without constraints on the size of the chip.

[0012] A still further objective is to speed up test time required in each design.

[0013] Current test solutions for chips with both logic and embedded memory are not optimized for test time. A typical solution involves testing the logic and memory in

serial This leads to wasted test time. For example, no logic testing is done during die pause portion of DRAM retention testing. Test time could be optimized if a solution existed that enabled parallel test of logic and embedded memory.

[0014] The present invention performs logic and embedded memory test in parallel. The basic concept of this invention is to provide the ability to perform logic scan testing in parallel with memory Built In Self Test (BIST). This is accomplished by:

[0015] (1) Voltage isolation between logic and memory segments

[0016] (2) Isolated logic and memory test clocks

[0017] (3) Scan bypass/isolation

[0018] (4) Test algorithm

[0019] Voltage isolation enables independent voltage levels to be supplied to logic and memory segments during test. Memory and logic test often require different voltage levels during respective testing. Voltage isolation may be achieved in several ways: (a) separate Vdd planes (i.e. Off-chip), (b) voltage regulators that generate each macro voltage level from an external reference voltage, (c) a control feature in the BIST engine that controls a reference to the voltage regulator for each macro, or (d) feedback from the logic portion of the chip to the regulator to control voltage levels. It should be understood that other well known techniques exist in the field that could also be used in this system to provide voltage isolation such that the invention should not be limited to the examples listed above.

Description of the Drawings

[0020] Fig. 1 is a block diagram of the present invention.

[0021] Fig. 2 is a block diagram of another aspect of the present invention.

[0022] Fig. 3 is a flow diagram of the present invention.

Detailed Description of Preferred Embodiment

[0023] Attention is directed to Fig. 1 which illustrates apparatus for enabling parallel testing on chips containing both logic and embedded memory. An essential element

of the apparatus is to provide independent clocking of the logic and the memory test sequences. The independent clocking capability allows logic test pattern to be loaded and results unloaded independently of the memory test clock requirements. The clocking signal may be supplied by an external tester 10 to a clock multiplier and control circuit 11. The clock multiplier circuit 11 provides test clock signals 12, 13, 14 to provide independent clock signals the logic portion 21 and a BIST on a memory macro portion 23 of the chip under test 20.

[0024] In an alternative arrangement the clock signal from the tester 10 may be applied to an on product clock generator 25 which could generate clock signals 12, 13, 14 directly or provide a signal to the clock multiplier control circuit 11 which would in turn generate the clock signals 12, 13, 14. The use of either arrangement would provide sufficient isolation of the clock signals to be applied to the chip under test.

[0025] As yet another alternative the tester 10 could provide all the clocks separately to the chip, this implementation while the simplest has the disadvantage of using a lot of I/O for test purposes only.

[0026] A built in self test system, circuits not shown, generate the test signals for the memory macro portion 23. Circuits 30 disable the test clocks to the memory macro(s) during BIST testing so that the 'Clock Mult & Control' circuit 11 block can generate BIST test clocks based on the reference frequency input from the tester, (or alternatively from the OPGC ckt (25). The control circuit 11 also generates the control signal to the multiplier 35 which selects the test clocks generated by the 'Clock Mult & Control' block during the operation of the BIST. This enables independent test clocks to be applied to the memory and logic segments. During scan operations, the clocks enable the global test clocks so that BIST contents can be properly unloaded (scanned out) as described hereinafter.

[0027] According to the present invention, part of the time (when testing the memory BIST engine) the logic and memory both get clocked at the same time, then to speed up test, once the BIST has been verified, the clocking to the BIST engine is separated (as memory testing follows a different clocking sequence than the logic) and the testing of the memory can proceed while logic testing also takes place.

[0028] Scan Bypass/Isolation

[0029] Scan bypass enables isolation of memory macros from the scan chains. This isolation is necessary during parallel test in order to load logic test patterns and unload test results via scan chains while the BIST engine is running. Figure 2 illustrates the preferred embodiment for scan bypass/isolation. Either a primary input 40 or general purpose test register latch 40 may be used to provide a control signal (labeled 'bypass') to a multiplexor 30 in each memory segment. The scan chain is used to load the BIST pattern. Once the BIST operation pattern is loaded from input 42, the control signal from the test latch 40 puts the MUX 30 into bypass mode by selecting the scan in signal, not the output 44 of the BIST engine. Logic patterns can then be loaded and results unloaded via the scan chains while the BIST engine is running. When the BIST is done, the bypass mux is taken out of the bypass mode and the results can be unloaded via the scan chains using the clocking scheme described earlier.

[0030] Figure 3 illustrates a high-level flow of the test algorithm. Once the scan chain 50 and BIST logic integrity 51 have been verified, BIST patterns are loaded via scan chains 52. The chip is not in bypass mode when loading BIST patterns and clocking is controlled by the global test clocks (not local BIST clocks). Once the BIST patterns are loaded, the chip is put into bypass mode 53 (memory macros are isolated from the scan chains) via the 'bypass signal' shown in Figure 2. In bypass mode, independent BIST test clocks are generated by the process described in section 2. Logic test patterns are loaded and results unloaded via scan chains in parallel with the BIST engine running 54. This is accomplished both isolated clocking and scan isolation from the memory macros. Voltage isolation may also be used during logic/BIST parallel testing. When BIST and logic tests are complete 55, the chip is taken out of bypass mode 56 and global test clocks again control the memory macros, BIST result are unloaded via scan chains 57. This process is repeated for all logic/BIST sequences.

[0031] it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various modifications and variations can be made in the parallel test circuit for the memory device of the present invention without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention. Thus, it is intended that the present invention cover the modifications and variations of this

invention provided they come within the scope of the appended claims and their equivalents.